

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
-----191005 111445 /12

O 190815Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO USLO RIYADH IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3104

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 BEIRUT 0744

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (SECTION INFO - 1 OF 3 VICE 1 OF 2)

FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS), PFOR, LE, US
SUBJECT: PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT SARKIS AND
SECRETARY VANCE FEB 18

1. FOLLOWING IS EXCHANGE BETWEEN SECRETARY VANCE
AND PRESIDENT SARKIS IN BEIRUT ON FEB 18 FROM 1230 TO
1315 HOURS AS RECORDED BY INTERPRETER/NOTETAKER ALEC
TOUMAYAN:

2. SARKIS: I WANT TO WELCOME YOU FIRST, AND HOPE THAT
YOU WILL HAVE A PLEASANT STAY ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE A
VERY BRIEF ONE. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL ACHIEVE ALL THE
RESULTS THAT YOU ARE ANTICIPATING IN THIS, YOUR FIRST
OFFICIAL TRIP OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES, AND I WISH
YOU THE GREATEST POSSIBLE SUCCESS.

3. VANCE: THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MR. PRESIDENT.
I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE HERE. I FELT THAT IT WAS
VERY IMPORTANT THAT I MEET WITH YOU ALSO, EVEN
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THOUGH THE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR MY TRIP IS TO MEET
WITH THE ARAB AND ISRAELI PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED
IN THE CONFRONTATION. BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO MEET
WITH YOU TO DEMONSTRATE OUR CONCERN OVER THE
DEVASTATION SUFFERED BY YOUR COUNTRY AND
DEMONSTRATE OUR FULL SUPPORT FOR THE MEASURES
YOU ARE TAKING TO RESTORE THE AUTHORITY OF THE

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, MEASURES WHICH WE KNOW WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. ONE OF THE THINGS I AM GLAD TO BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE TO YOU TODAY IS THAT WE WILL MAKE \$50 MILLION AVAILABLE TO LEBANON AS AID IN FOOD, MEDICAL PRODUCTS AND RECONSTRUCTION FOR HOUSING AND PORT FACILITIES. WE HOPE THIS ASSISTANCE WILL HELP BEGIN THE LONG AND ARDUOUS ROAD TOWARD RECONSTRUCTION. WE HOPE FURTHER THAT THIS DEMONSTRATION WILL ENCOURAGE OTHER COUNTRIES TO JOIN IN MAKING FUNDS AVAILABLE TO LEBANON FOR ASSISTANCE.

4. EARLIER, DURING A MEETING WITH YOUR FOREIGN MINISTER, WE DISCUSSED TWO ISSUES; ONE WAS THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND THE POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION OF LEBANON IN IT, THE SECOND WAS THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS THAT HAS OCCURRED THERE IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS, IN THE COURSE OF WHICH WE ACTED AS INTERMEDIARIES BETWEEN THE PARTIES. CONCERNING THE FIRST SUBJECT, I SUMMARIZED THE RESULTS OF MY VISITS IN ISRAEL AND CAIRO. I FOUND WIDE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS, AND I WOULD DEFINE THESE MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE PERHAPS IN AN OVERSIMPLISTIC WAY AS CONSISTING OF PEACE, WITHDRAWAL AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. I FOUND EVEN WIDER DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON PROCEDURAL MATTERS, ESPECIALLY WHERE THE PLO IS CONCERNED. BUT I AM ENCOURAGED TO FIND IN BOTH ISRAEL AND CAIRO A
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SITUATION WHICH CAN BE SUMMARIZED IN THE FLAT STATEMENT THAT IF THE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS CAN BE RESOLVED, THEN ALL INTERESTED PARTIES WILL GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT ANY PRE-CONDITIONS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AND PREPARED TO DISCUSS ALL QUESTIONS. I MADE CLEAR, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT WE SEE THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES AS TRYING TO WORK AMONG THE PARTIES TO WORK OUT COMMON POSITIONS AND NARROW DOWN DIFFERENCES. I BELIEVE THAT THAT IS THE ROLE WE SHOULD PLAY. IT WOULD THUS BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR US TO STATE OUR OPINIONS ON WHAT A PREFERRED SOLUTION WOULD BE OR EXPRESS IN DETAILS OUR OPINIONS CONCERNING THE VIEWS OF THE DIFFERENT PARTIES. I REFER OF COURSE TO OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS, BECAUSE NATURALLY WE HAVE OUR OWN VIEWS WHICH WE SHALL COMMUNICATE PRIVATELY TO THE PARTIES, NOT IN PUBLIC. IS THAT A SENSIBLE ATTITUDE IN YOUR OPINION, MR. PRESIDENT?

5. SARKIS: ALLOW ME TO RESPOND TO THE VARIOUS POINTS YOU HAVE RAISED. FIRST OF ALL I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE AID YOU HAVE JUST ANNOUNCED, AS WELL AS FOR ALL THE OTHER EFFORTS YOUR GREAT DEMOCRACY HAS EXERTED ON OUR BEHALF. WE KNOW YOU HAVE DONE MUCH TO HELP RESTORE CALM TO OUR COUNTRY. BUT I WILL DEMAND EVEN MORE, BECAUSE DURING THIS CRITICAL PHASE OF OUR HISTORY WE NEED THE EFFORTS OF THE UNITED STATES TO INSURE THAT LAW AND ORDER AND CALM CONTINUE TO PREVAIL IN THE COUNTRY AND TO PRESERVE OUR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE AND OUR SOVEREIGNTY.

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FOR THE SECRETARY

6. CONCERNING GENEVA, MR. SECRETARY, JUST TO SPEAK OF IT IS A POSITIVE STEP IN ITSELF. THE CONCERN IS RICH IN PROMISE. THE FACT THAT THE CONTENDING PARTIES AGREE TO MEET AND DISCUSS AND NEGOTIATE IS ONE STEP FORWARD. CONCERNING THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES, I AGREE WITH YOU, MR. SECRETARY, THAT IT IS ENTIRELY APPROPRIATE THAT THE UNITED STATES NOT IMPOSE ITS POSITIONS UPON THE PARTIES. BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR WORLDWIDE RESPONSIBILITY AND OF YOUR MORAL RESPONSIBILITY, PARTICULARLY VIS-A-VIS FRIENDLY NATIONS, THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE TO TRY BY EVERY MEANS, EVEN WHILE FOLLOWING THE PROCEDURE YOU HAVE MENTIONED, TO BRING THE PARTIES TOGETHER, EVEN THROUGH THE EXERTION OF PRESSURE COMMENSURATE TO YOUR SIZE TO CONTRIBUTE

TO A MEETING OF NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE POSITIVE, IT SHOULD BE THAT OF AN ARBITRATOR, BUT A POSITIVE ONE. I HOPE THAT THAT IS THE ONLY ROLE THAT YOU FORESEE FOR THE UNITED STATES - THAT OF AN EFFICIENT, CONSTRUCTIVE ARBITRATOR IMPOSING UPON THE PARTIES THE VIEWPOINT THAT YOU DEEM NECESSARY.

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7. VANCE: I AGREE WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT WE PLAY A POSITIVE AND AFFIRMATIVE ROLE AND THAT WE MAKE OUR VIEWS CLEARLY KNOWN TO THE PARTIES. BUT I AM SOMEWHAT TROUBLED BY YOUR USE OF THE WORD "IMPOSE." I WOULD PREFER PERSUASION.

8. SARKIS: YES. I HAVE IN MIND MORAL PRESSURE ESSENTIALLY TO LEAD TO THE FIRST STEP OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, THE PROCEDURAL STAGE. TO ME IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT A NEGOTIATION SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE BECAUSE OF A LACK OF AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURE. I HOPE THAT PROCEDURE WILL NOT BE STUMBLING BLOCK.

9. VANCE: I FULLY CONCUR. I HAVE INDICATED THAT OUR VIEW WAS THAT A GENEVA MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE DURING THE SECOND HALF OF '77. IT WOULD NOT BE PROCTICAL TO HAVE IT BEFORE, BECAUSE THE ISRAELI ELECTION WILL TAKE PLACE IN MAY AND IT WILL THEN TAKE SOME TIME FOR THE ISRAELIS TO ORGANIZE THE COALITION THAT WILL RULE THEM.

10. SARKIS. I FULLY AGREE.

11. VANCE: THE QUESTION WAS RAISED EARLIER ABOUT A PARTICIPATION OF LEBANON AT GENEVA IF IT SHOULD CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE. IT IS THE VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES THAT LEBANON HAS A VERY CLEAR INTEREST IN A FINAL SETTLEMENT BECAUSE IT IS DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY ONE OR MORE OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED, AND FOR OUR PART WE WOULD WELCOME A PARTICIPATION OF LEBANON AT GENEVA IF IT CHOOSES TO ASK TO BECOME A MEMBER. I HAVE POINTED OUT ALSO THAT PROCEDURALLY WE CANNOT, AS CO-CHAIRMAN, INVITE YOU ALONE, BECAUSE IT WAS DECIDED BY THE CONFERENCE IN 1973 THAT THE CONCURRENCE OF ALL ORIGINAL PARTIES IS REQUIRED,

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BUT THAT SHOULD PROVE TO BE NO OBSTACLE.

12. SARKIS: I NEED NOT SAY THAT LEBANON WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO HELP GENEVA SUCCEED AND THAT LEBANON WILL BE READY TO PARTICIPATE WHEN THE TIME COMES. AND LET ME BE A BIT MORE SPECIFIC ABOUT WHEN THAT TIME SHOULD BE. IF I UNDERSTAND THE AGENDA YOU HAVE OUTLINED, THERE WILL BE THREE STAGES, THREE OBJECTIVES TO BE ATTAINED: PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, WITHDRAWAL OF THE ISRAELI TROOPS FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THAT LAST QUESTION DOES NOT CONCERN US, BUT FOR PEACE IN THE REGION WE ARE PREPARED TO DO THE UTMOST AND ALSO DO ALL WE CAN TOWARDS SOLVING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. OUR RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL ARE BASED ON THE 1948 ARMISTICE, WHICH WE CARRY OUT VERY STRICTLY. THOSE FRONTIERS ARE RECOGNIZED INTERNATIONALLY AND THERE IS NO CHANGE INVOLVED HERE.

13. THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL POINT THAT I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION. IN 1969, WHEN I WAS GOVERNOR OF THE BANK, I WAS VISITING IN WASHINGTON, AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE I WAS TOLD BY AMBASSADOR DAVIES, WHO HAS SINCE BEEN KILLED IN CYPRUS, THAT THE DAY BEFORE HE HAD TALKED TO GOLDAMEIR, AND THAT IT WAS THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT THAT SHE ACCEPTED THE BORDERS OF LEBANON AS FINAL. ON THE MAP THE BORDER WITH LEBANON APPEARS AS A SOLID LINE; WITH THE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES IT IS A DOTTED LINE.

14. CONCERNING THE MIDDLE EAST, WE ARE READY TO PARTICIPATE AND HELP A GENEVA MEETING TO LEAD TO PEACE IN THE REGION. WE ARE VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION BECAUSE IT IS A HEAVY BURDEN UPON US.

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FOR THE SECRETARY

15. VANCE: ANOTHER QUESTION WE DISCUSSED WAS SOUTHERN LEBANON AND RECENT EVENTS THERE, AS WELL AS WHAT COULD BE DONE IN THE FUTURE TO TRY AND AVOID INCIDENTS OF THAT KIND. I INDICATED THAT WE APPRECIATE THE STATESMANLIKE MANNER IN WHICH YOU HAD HANDLED THIS DIFFICULT SITUATION AND DEFUSED A DANGEROUS SITUATION. OUR ROLE IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE PARTIES INVOLVED UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER'S CONCERNS, AND WE SHALL BE HAPPY TO CONTINUE TO PERFORM THAT ROLE. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROBLEM IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO RECONSTITUTE THE NATIONAL FORCES, EITHER THE SECURITY FORCES OR THE ARMY.

16. WHEN I WAS IN ISRAEL THE ISRAELIS RAISED THE QUESTION, AND PRESIDENT SADAT ALSO RAISED IT LAST NIGHT. THE ISRAELIS GENERALLY FEAR THE PRESENCE OF SYRIAN TROOPS SO CLOSE TO THEIR BORDERS. THIS IS A VERY GENUINE CONCERN ON THEIR PART. WE SPOKE OF YOUR DIFFICULTIES AND OF THE LACK OF LEBANESE TROOPS. THEY UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT DID NO DISPEL THE DEEP CONCERN
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THEY FEEL CONCERNING SYRIAN FORCES. THE STEP YOU TOOK OF PULLING BACK THE ARAB SECURITY FORCE TO AYSHIYA IS A VERY CONSTRUCTIVE STEP. PRESIDENT SADAT ALSO RAISED A QUESTION WITH ME. HE WONDERED WHY LEBANESE TROOPS COULD NOT BE USED. HE MENTIONED A NUMBER OF 500 TROOPS. BUT YOUR FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS THAT IT NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE DEEP DIVISIONS THAT EXIST IN THE ARMY IN THE SOUTH AND THE LACK OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO FACTIONS THERE. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA, MR. PRESIDENT,

HOW SOON YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DEVELOP LEBANESE
FORCES TO PERFORM THAT FUNCTION?

17. SARKIS: GOING BACK TO THE MATTER OF WHAT
PRIORITIES WE HAVE SET FOR OURSELVES, WE THOUGHT
IT WOULD BE WISE NOT TO TAKE UP THE ARMY CASE RIGHT
AWAY BECAUSE IT IS SUCH A SERIOUS, DELICATE AND
COMPLEX MATTER. WE HAVE SET AS OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY
THE NEED TO RESTORE CALM, RESOLVE THE SOCIAL
PROBLEMS, AND IT IS ONLY RECENTLY THAT WE HAVE
TAKEN TWO LEGISLATIVE DECREES, ONE REGARDING THE
ARMY AND THE OTHER REGARDING THE SECURITY FORCES.
IT IS THEREFORE QUITE RECENTLY THAT WE HAVE BEGUN
TO LOOK INTO THE ARMY SITUATION, WHICH IS A VERY
COMPLEX ONE, AND I CAN SET NO DATE. WE HAVE ONLY
BEEN LOOKING AT THE DOSSIER FOR FIVE OR SIX DAYS.
I HOPE TO BE ABLE TO SUBMIT A PLAN TO THE CHAMBER
WITHIN THREE TO SIX MONTHS.

18. I WANT TO RESPOND TO THE ISRAELI VIEWPOINT.
THE PRESENCE OF SO-CALLED SYRIAN TROOPS, WHICH
ARE PLACED UNDER LEBANESE AUTHORITY IN PLACE
OF LEBANESE TROOPS AND WHICH ARE LOCATED WHERE
THEY ARE, CAN IN NO WAY CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO
ISRAEL. THERE ARE ONLY 500 SCATTERED SPARSELY
THROUGH A WIDE AREA IN WHICH YOU HAVE MANY
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VILLAGES WHERE THE INHABITANTS--CHRISTIANS AND
MOSLEMS--ARE ENTITLED TO SECURITY. THESE SOLDIERS
ARE PRESENT IN SMALL NUMBERS.

19. VANCE: THE ISRAELIS ARE SINCERELY CONCERNED
OVER THESE SYRIAN TROOPS.

20. SARKIS: I HAVE PROPOSED THAT THESE TROOPS BE
REPLACED BY NON-SYRIAN TROOPS, AS I TOLD YOUR
CHARGE, MR. LANE. THEY COULD BE TROOPS FROM
THE EMIRATES, FROM SAUDI ARABIA OR FROM THE SUDAN.
BUT THERE IS A LACK OF JUSTICE VIS-A-VIS THESE
CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM VILLAGERS.

21. VANCE: I HAVE HERE A LETTER FROM MY
PRESIDENT FOR YOU WHICH HE ASKED ME TO GIVE
YOU WITH HIS BEST WISHES.
PARKER

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Sent Date: 19-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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